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THE TECHNIQUE OF SUPERVISING HIGH-SCHOOL PRACTICE TEACHING

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This report presents the results of an investigation which was undertaken to determine the methods which are used in supervising practice teaching. In order to secure a list of the problems which should be studied, a preliminary investigation¹ was made of methods of supervising practice teaching in one university high school. The study showed that the various problems grouped themselves readily about the following points: aims, general requirements, conferences, observations, routine work, lesson plans, actual teaching, the criticism and improvement of class teaching, term papers, and methods of grading.

A questionnaire based on these topics was prepared and sent to more than fifty colleges and universities which provide practice-teaching opportunities. Reports were requested from the general supervisor of practice teaching and from a member of each department which trains teachers. In addition to the information called for on the questionnaire blank, each co-operator was asked to submit a copy of any printed or mimeographed material in use relating to the topics referred to in the questionnaire. If the questions did not cover all important phases of the work of any department, the co-operator was asked to attach a sheet of comments concern-

¹ Each department of the University High School of the University of Chicago contributed very valuable material in this preliminary study. The writer is under special obligation to Ernst R. Breslich of the Department of Mathematics and Charles J. Pieper of the Science Department.

ing such items. In this way it was hoped that definite information would be secured concerning special phases of the problem which have been emphasized in a given department or college.

Seventy-five reports were received representing twenty-seven colleges and universities. The discussion which follows attempts to summarize the most significant facts and tendencies which were revealed in the reports.

I. AIMS

The following directions were given concerning the aims of practice teaching: "Read the list of aims of practice teaching given below. Add to this list other aims which you consider important. Check the three aims of the entire list which you emphasize most."

The aims and the number of times each was mentioned in the reports follow:

1. To develop teaching power or ability (62).
2. To learn to select and organize subject-matter (40).
3. To familiarize students with important teaching problems (36).
4. To familiarize students with the needs of the classroom (19).
5. To develop a professional attitude (17).
6. To review and appreciate the significance of principles of pedagogy and psychology (17).
7. To review subject-matter (5).

Twenty-nine aims not listed in the questionnaire appeared in the reports. The majority of these readily grouped themselves into two general classes, namely, to study and develop the personal qualities essential in teaching and to study the values to be derived from the subject.

The reports clearly indicated that the most important aim of practice teaching is the development of the habits and practical adjustments which are essential in effective teaching. A study of principles of teaching and a review of subject-matter do not hold a large place in practice-teaching courses.

II. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Information concerning the general requirements which are made in practice-teaching courses was secured. The following list of requirements includes those which are almost universally required of students early in their practice-teaching courses:

1. Familiarity with the content of all printed and mimeographed material relating to practice-teaching.
2. Familiarity with the content of the textbooks and manuals used by the class, including source materials, illustrative materials, laboratory or other supplies, current literature, etc.
3. A careful preparation of assigned supplementary readings on the content of the course.
4. A clear understanding of the specific objectives or results which are to be secured through instruction during the term.
5. Preparation of a comprehensive, preliminary outline of the term's work.
6. A thorough study of assigned readings on special problems of teaching the course.
7. Familiarity with all the pupils of the class by name, together with a general knowledge of their preparation and individual needs.
8. Command of good oral and written English.
9. Prompt and regular attendance at all class exercises, and conscientious and thorough preparation of all work assigned to the class

III. CONFERENCES

Five questions were asked in regard to the nature and frequency of conferences with student-teachers. The reports indicated that group conferences of all students under the supervision of a given teacher are held approximately once a week in practically all institutions.

Individual conferences in regard to lesson plans, teaching problems, methods, devices, etc., are held two or three times a week as a rule, or as frequently as may be necessary.

Students are required to attend departmental conferences in about 25 per cent of the institutions which reported. It was

stated in many reports that the plan was approved, but that such conferences were never called, owing to the small size of the departments. Very few institutions require student-teachers to attend the regular faculty meetings of the high school. The plan was heartily approved, however, in most cases.

Typical statements concerning the nature of the general conferences follow:

1. My conferences are chiefly directed at obtaining satisfactory teaching plans in advance of the actual class work. The students' plans are criticized and suggestions for improvement are offered.

2. Conferences consist of round-table discussions of teaching problems, methods of presentation, questions of discipline, lesson plans, etc. Before the student teaches the class he is required to prepare a detailed lesson plan. Each student presents his plan at the conference, and the other students criticize the plan. The teacher who has prepared the plan must be able to answer questions concerning the subject-matter, defend the plan, and give reasons for the particular methods of presentation.

3. Demonstration lessons are given to illustrate special methods of teaching.

4. Students give critical reviews of recitations which they have observed. Important principles of teaching are reviewed in this connection.

5. The strong and weak points in the teaching of the week are discussed, and helpful suggestions are made.

6. Students report on special problems which they have been studying in detail during the past week.

7. The preparation, home conditions, and special points of strength and weakness of individual pupils are discussed. Suggestions are offered in regard to appropriate methods of helping particular pupils.

8. Routine matters for the following week are discussed. Special assignments are made to each student.

It is evident from the foregoing that general conferences are devoted very largely to practical discussions of classroom problems. Theoretical discussions of methodology favored by some supervisors occur very infrequently in general.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

Information was secured concerning the point of view and practices of various institutions in regard to observations. Practically all co-operators agreed that systematic observation in practice-teaching courses is of great value. In 40 per cent of the cases, however, such a plan was impossible owing to unfavorable conditions in the institution.

The aims of observation were stated as follows:

1. To become familiar with classroom conditions.
2. To learn the methods and devices used by different teachers.
3. To secure concrete illustrations of effective teaching devices.
4. To acquaint students with essential elements of a class exercise.
5. To learn how successful teachers meet and solve problems of class organization and control.
6. To experience and adopt high standards and ideals in regard to teaching.

In most institutions the directions for observations are prepared and supplied by the general supervisor of practice teaching. In only a few cases are special sets of suggestions for observations prepared by special departments. The opinion was frequently expressed, however, that the general directions could be supplemented to advantage by questions concerning teaching problems which are peculiar to special subjects.

Conferences are held after observations in practically all institutions. In a majority of the cases group conferences are held at intervals of about one week for the purpose of discussing observations. In those institutions in which observations are discussed individually with students, the conferences are held not more than a day or two following the observation.

The number of observations ranges from one each day throughout the term to no assigned observations. The number usually varied with the facilities for observations. The

statement was frequently made that well-directed, systematic observations are of so much value that their number should be greatly increased.

V. ROUTINE

In order to secure a list of the routine responsibilities which are assigned to student teachers, the co-operators were asked to check on a prepared list the items of routine which are required most and to add others. The following list contains various items of routine in the order of the frequency with which they were mentioned:

1. Giving individual help to pupils in addition to help given in the classroom, explaining errors in written reports, assisting pupils in library work, etc.
2. Assisting in supervised work and presiding over study-halls.
3. Grading work and keeping a record of the grades of pupils.
4. Responsibility for the physical condition of the room.
5. Studying the teacher's system of reading and grading papers.
6. Keeping records of absences and tardinesses; reporting such absences to the office; handling readmission slips presented by the pupils.
7. Preparing sample examination questions.
8. Keeping a record of the amount of teaching done and of the time spent on routine work outside of school time.
9. Collecting and passing papers, distributing laboratory materials, preparing materials for exhibits, orderly arrangement of classroom, etc.
10. Keeping a record of the results of each day's teaching by writing comments on the lesson plans.
11. Examining and checking notebooks.
12. Conducting examinations and grading papers.
13. Assisting in calling and dismissing classes, ringing gongs, etc.
14. Keeping a record of home work done by the pupils.
15. Providing the teacher with a list of needed supplies.
16. Keeping a record of work in the progress book.
17. Keeping apparatus in order and caring for equipment of room.
18. Assisting in demonstrations.
19. Arranging illustrative material.
20. Keeping in close touch with pupils to gain a knowledge of their point of view and of their needs.

VI. LESSON PLANS

Lesson plans are required in all practice-teaching courses. As far as possible the supervisors of practice teaching insist that practice in plan-writing be made prerequisite to practice-teaching courses. Where such preliminary training has not been provided, students are given model plans and are required to write several plans before they are permitted to teach. In practically all institutions some type of lesson plan is required for each lesson taught. Each plan or outline which is submitted is corrected by the supervisor and returned with corrections before the lesson is taught. In 60 per cent of the institutions students are permitted to submit general outlines of the lessons in place of detailed plans as rapidly as they demonstrate teaching skill. In about 40 per cent of the institutions a detailed plan is required for each lesson in order to promote the habit of preparing each lesson thoroughly.

VII. ACTUAL TEACHING

Two plans are followed in introducing student teachers to teaching responsibilities. In a majority of the institutions which reported, students are asked to assume charge of a class at the beginning of a course or within a very few days. Those who follow this method believe that better results can be secured by imposing large responsibilities at the beginning. Those who believe that it is advisable to allow the student to develop power and confidence before he assumes full responsibility of the class pursue the following plan:

1. The student-teacher does no teaching of any type until after a week or two of carefully directed observations.
2. The student-teacher then assumes minor teaching responsibilities such as making announcements and making reports on assigned home work at the opening of the class hour, first in the presence of the supervising teacher, later during his absence.
3. The length of the period during which the student-teacher has entire control of the class is gradually increased. Following the types of work

mentioned above, the student-teacher may present a subtopic requiring from ten to twenty minutes. Later on he teaches entire periods.

VIII. CRITICISMS OF CLASS TEACHING

The reports contained three types of information in regard to the criticism of class teaching: (*a*) the standards by which teachers judge the quality of class teaching; (*b*) methods of giving criticisms; and (*c*) methods of securing growth on the part of student-teachers.

The standards for judging the quality of teaching which were submitted were so different in form and content that it was impossible to summarize them effectively in a general statement. They readily grouped themselves, however, into three general classes. The type which was reported most frequently consisted of a series of ten or more questions relating to important phases of teaching. The following questions were submitted by one supervisor:

1. Does the teacher find and state the purpose of each lesson unit?
2. Do the pupils find and state the central problem idea, law, etc.?
3. Does the teacher have the relationships of the subject clearly in mind?.
4. Is the teacher able to rearrange the subject in a psychological order or presentation?
5. Does the teacher follow the general plan approved in the conference?
6. Does the teacher think out the key questions in advance of the recitation?
7. Does the teacher adapt the material and methods to meet individual needs?
8. Does the recitation provide for real thinking?
9. Does the class display genuine interest?

The second type consisted of an outline of topics similar to those included in Boyce's *Record of Teaching Efficiency*. The number of topics in a report ranged from five to forty or more. The following topics are typical of those included in the briefer reports: (*a*) personality; (*b*) ability to discipline; (*c*) ability to instruct; (*d*) results obtained; (*e*) attitude toward supervisors.

The third type included questions concerning the technique of teaching a given subject. Only a few such reports were submitted, inasmuch as most teachers of special subjects sent in outlines relating only to points of general methodology. It was evident, however, that considerable attention should be given to teaching problems which are peculiar to the subject which is taught.

A considerable number of the reports emphasized the value of judging teaching on the basis of the results secured. In this connection a distinction was advisedly drawn between measured results and observed results.

A careful consideration of all of the suggestions which were submitted lead to the tentative conclusion that the quality of a teacher's work may legitimately be judged from the following points of view:

1. By the results which are secured, including both the measured and the observed results.
2. By the extent to which the general principles underlying effective teaching are observed.
3. By the extent to which the most effective methods and devices of teaching a special subject are followed.

The reports contained somewhat uniform suggestions concerning methods of giving criticisms. They were summarized in terms of the following statements:

1. The lesson is usually discussed in the light of certain standards which have been previously discussed and adopted.
2. The teacher has a conference with the student as early as possible after a recitation. Only in very rare instances are criticisms given during the course of a recitation or in the presence of pupils.
3. The conference usually takes the form of a discussion in which the student is encouraged to evaluate his own teaching. The discussion is frequently initiated with favorable comments by the teacher or with questions which center the student's attention on significant phases of the recitation.
4. The discussions emphasize both favorable and adverse points. The causes of the weaknesses are determined, and methods of improvement are discussed.

5. Only a limited number of points are discussed in a given conference. Long discussions covering a large number of points lead to confusion rather than growth.

6. The suggestions which are worked out in the conference or which are submitted by the supervising teacher are written in permanent form. One copy is given to the student, one is filed in the office, and one is kept by the teacher.

The following methods of securing growth on the part of student-teachers were mentioned in the reports:

1. Students are supplied with specific references, with definite outlines, and with concrete suggestions and devices for teaching.

2. Provision is made for a large amount of initiative and freedom in trying out new methods and devices.

3. Copies of rating scales are given to students, who grade themselves and keep records of their progress.

4. Students are required to concentrate on one or two problems each week and to prepare a written report concerning the means employed in solving the problem, the obstacles encountered, and the success attained.

5. Students are not allowed to remain with a given teacher for more than two months, provided there are several equally well-qualified teachers available.

6. Students are encouraged to go to the teachers for help whenever they feel a need for advice.

7. Teachers present high professional standards to students, and exemplify them in their own teaching.

IX. TERM PAPERS

Term papers are required by fewer than 20 per cent of the teachers and supervisors who submitted reports. The following types of term papers or reports were mentioned: (*a*) an outline of the semester's work; (*b*) answers to the following questions: In what respects have you received help? In what respects would you like more help? What, in your judgment, would improve the course? (*c*) a summary of the main points which have been emphasized in regard to teaching; (*d*) a written report of the term's work or, better, of some special problem of the term's work, such as an article for the state teachers' journal; (*e*) a paper on some problem of teaching. The purpose

of a term paper is "to provide opportunity for training in looking up relevant materials, and in thinking and forming judgments for oneself."

X. GRADING

The teachers and supervisors who co-operated were requested to submit copies or written descriptions of their grading plans. In 60 per cent of the reports no reply was made to this inquiry, indicating that no definite plan other than the general impression method had been formulated. In 20 per cent of the reports the statement was made that no formal analysis of the grades is made, inasmuch as the teacher grades on the basis of his general impression of the student's work. The following statement is typical: "No formal plan is used. The supervisor hands his estimate of the student's work to the director. This estimate is expressed in letters according to the Missouri system of grading."

Fifteen plans were submitted which are in use in different institutions. These plans vary in content from a brief statement of the strong and weak points in teaching to a detailed analysis of the teacher's work such as is possible with Boyce's *Record of Teaching Efficiency*. The need is expressed frequently for a rating plan which secures a detailed, graphical, impersonal record of a student's work.

Time will not permit further discussion of the various grading plans in use. Numerous progressive tendencies were revealed in the methods employed in a large number of schools. Those who are interested in this problem are advised to secure copies of the Boyce *Record of Teaching Efficiency* and of the grading plans used in the following institutions: University of Wisconsin; University of North Carolina; University of Minnesota; Leland Stanford Junior University; Ohio Wesleyan University; and St. Olaf College.